

**Watchwords by Officer Tom Hanshaw**  
**February 24, 2012**

Domestic violence continues to be a serious problem in our community and cities across the Nation. Rarely does a day go by without a news story and too often that story has a tragic ending. Great progress has been made locally with the dedication of agencies like the Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center and their partnerships with police departments and the District Court but incidents continue. Domestic violence is not limited to couples either, incidents also occur between children and parents, siblings and household members. Another group experiencing domestic issues is teenagers; who are much less likely to report incidents or seek help. In an attempt to call further attention to this problem, the month of February is Teen Domestic Violence prevention month.

Teen domestic violence is not limited to physical abuse but also includes yelling, making threats, harassing, name calling and displaying outward signs of possessiveness like constant telephone calling. Victims are less likely to discuss the situation in fear of peer pressure or being neglected. In fact, the National Crime Prevention Council estimates two out of three incidents go unreported. Teen domestic violence can lead victims into using drugs, alcohol and tobacco, eating disorders and sadly even suicide.

Parents of a teenager who is dating should be alert to the following warning signs:

- Before she met her boyfriend, she had more friends than she does now.
- Her grades have declined in the past weeks or months.
- Before she began dating him, she was more outgoing and involved with her family, school activities, and/or place of worship.
- She frequently cries or is very sad.
- If he calls or texts her, she must get back to him immediately.
- He told her that he loved her early in their relationship.
- He is jealous if she looks at or speaks casually with another boy.
- He accuses her of behavior she doesn't actually engage in.
- He is aggressive in other areas of his life: he puts his fist through walls or closets, bangs his fist to make a point, or throws things when angry.
- He frequently roughhouses or play-wrestles with her.
- She makes excuses for his poor behavior or says it's her fault.
- He calls and texts her many times an hour, frequently between midnight and 5 a.m.
- He has a "tragic" home life: he is or was physically or verbally abused
- One or both of his parents are alcoholics or use drugs.
- He drinks or uses drugs.
- He frequently gives her "advice" about her choice of hairstyle, clothes, or makeup.

The Amesbury Police Department and Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center work very closely to address the problem of domestic violence and are tremendous resources for help; as a parent or guardian, don't be afraid to ask for assistance if you suspect there's a problem. The Crisis Center hotline number is 978-388-1888 and Detective Bob Wile is the Domestic Liaison with the Police Department; he can be reached at 978-388-1217.

■